

Decision Memorandum on Action and for Application of:
Categorical Exclusion 1.12

Panaca Wildland Urban Interface

U. S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Ely Field Office
Lincoln and White Pine Counties, Nevada

Purpose/Need for the Action and Proposed Action

The purpose/goal of the project is to reduce the risk of wildfire to Panaca, Nevada through the use of mechanical methods on approximately 22 acres of public land and 16 acres of private land within the wildland urban interface (WUI) of Panaca, Nevada.

The Panaca Wildland Urban Interface Fuels Reduction Project would involve mowing vegetation within a 200 foot strip along the south and eastern boundary of the community (See Attached Map). The mow strip would start at the southern end of Panaca at the Little Hogback and follow the existing dike north along the eastern edge of Panaca to State Route 319. Mowing here would occur on the east side of the dike. From State Route 319 a strip would be mowed on the west side of a road running from the highway to the cemetery. Also at the southern edge of Panaca a strip would be mowed along the private/public boundary of a home that occurs on the east side of the dike. A total of 38 acres is being proposed to be mowed, 16 acres on private and 22 on public. The majority of these areas have been previously disturbed. The area along the entire length of the dike was disturbed during dike construction. The area at the southern end of town around the home is also partially disturbed. The area along the road north of the highway contains a previously bladed area that was used as a remote control airplane park. The mow area would then be seeded using certified weed-free seed.

Plan Conformance

The proposed project is covered by the Caliente Management Framework Plan. The proposed project is not specifically identified in the plan, but is consistent with the following objective: "Provide for the maximum safety of the visitor, for the protection of personal property, and for the quality of the natural environment through development of a sound fire management and suppression program".

The proposed action was designed in conformance with all bureau standards and incorporates appropriate guidelines for specific required and desired conditions relevant to project activities (mechanical treatments). The project is in conformance with the Healthy Forest Initiative.

Compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act

The proposed action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with 516DM 2, Appendix 1, 1.12. The projects are less than 1,000 acres for mechanical and 4,500 acres for prescribed burning. The projects are also within a WUI area or areas that are in Condition Classes 2 or 3 in Fire Regime Groups I, II, or III. The application of this categorical exclusion is appropriate in this situation because there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effect which may significantly affect the environment. None of the exceptions apply. As shown in the checklist of the categorical exclusion document, none of the exceptions as listed in 516 DM Chapter 2, Appendix 2 apply to this project.

I considered project size (less than 1,000 acres for mechanical), and project location (within wildland urban interface), proposed method of implementation, vegetation condition and setting during the design of the activities, standard operating procedures, and mitigation measures outlined in determining that no potential significant effects from implementation of this project would occur.

Persons or Agencies Consulted

The project was developed with Harry Berkmyer of the Panaca Volunteer Fire Department. Individuals and groups who have expressed interest in participating in hazardous fuels reduction projects as well as state and federal wildlife agencies were provided with the categorical exclusion and this decision. An article was also placed in the Lincoln County Record concerning the categorical exclusion and was presented at the Tribal Coordination meeting on 05/18/06.

Decision and Rationale for Action

I have decided to implement the Panaca Wildland Urban Interface Project without modifications. I have reviewed the plan conformance statement and have determined that the proposed action is in conformance with the Caliente Management Framework Plan and that no further environmental analysis is required.

Implementation Date

This project will be implemented on or after June 15, 2006.

Stephanie Connolly
Acting Field Manager,
Ely Field Office
Bureau of Land Management

Date

Administrative Review or Appeal Opportunities

Within 30 days of receipt of this decision, parties who are adversely affected and believe it is incorrect have the right to appeal to the Department of the Interior Board of Land Appeals, Office of the Secretary, in accordance with regulations at 43 CFR 4.4. If an appeal is taken, follow procedures outlined in the attached form, “Information on taking appeals to the Board of Land Appeals.” An appeal should be in writing and specify the reasons, clearly and concisely, as to why the decision is in error. Please also supply this office with a copy of the Statement of Reasons. Also within 30 days of receipt of this decision, appellants have a right to file a petition for stay (suspension) of the decision together with an appeal, in accordance with the regulations at 43 CFR 4.21. The petition must be served upon the same parties identified in items 2, 3, and 4 of the form “Information on taking appeals to the Board of Land Appeals.” The appellant has the burden of proof to demonstrate that the stay should be granted.

Contact

For additional information concerning this decision, contact Kyle Teel, Fire Ecologist, at the Caliente Field Station, P.O. Box 237, Caliente, NV 89008; Telephone (775) 726-8117.